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## New Snowden Leak Reveals The NSA Planted Agents Inside 'World of Warcraft'



The Guardian recently said they have only published a very tiny percentage of the NSA documents provided to them by the now-infamous leaker Edward Snowden, and now a new revelation has taken a strange turn into the video game realm.

[Documents provided by Snowden](#) from 2008 say that the NSA and the UK's GCHQ agencies planted agents inside MMOs like World of Warcraft and Second Life. The document, called *Exploiting Terrorist Use of Games & Virtual Environments*, was published this week, and tells tales of the spy agencies trying to track down terrorist communications through each of the games. Eventually, Xbox Live was considered a possible means for terrorist contact as well.

“Terrorists use online games – but perhaps not for their amusement,” it says. “They are suspected of using them to communicate secretly and to transfer funds.”

The idea was that games like World of Warcraft and Second Life could be

used as under the radar avenues for communication between terrorist, and even help transfer funds.

“Al-Qaida terrorist target selectors and ... have been found associated with Xbox Live, Second Life, World of Warcraft, and other GVEs [Games and Virtual Environments],” the document says. “Other targets include Chinese hackers, an Iranian nuclear scientist, Hizballah, and Hamas members.”

But the evidence was hardly conclusive. The data collected could have simply meant that someone in the same internet cafe was gaming, or that whatever PC was being used was at some point used to play video games at an indeterminate point in the past.

The document also shows that the NSA tried to recruit gamers to help with the project, but ultimately, it's never said that they found any evidence of terrorists using either game for communication or collaboration, or that any terror plots were stopped through their work in the virtual realms.

Since the revelation, Blizzard has spoken out saying that they were “unaware of any surveillance taking place,” and never gave the NSA permission to infiltrate the game. There's no telling just how much data the NSA collected on “suspect” players, which could include everything from personal information to text or verbal in-game communication. Yet again, privacy seems to mean little to the NSA, in this world or virtual ones.

It's a strange story, but one that's sort of familiar at this point. The NSA does something that sounds both simultaneously silly and invasive, and manages to come up with no tangible results in the process. It's not an *entirely* ridiculous idea, and I imagine video games like these could theoretically be used for the nefarious purposes the NSA describes, but I'm having a hard time not laughing when picturing a bunch of government agents spending their workday grinding for XP and loot so they can reach the level of the elite terrorist guilds they want to infiltrate.

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